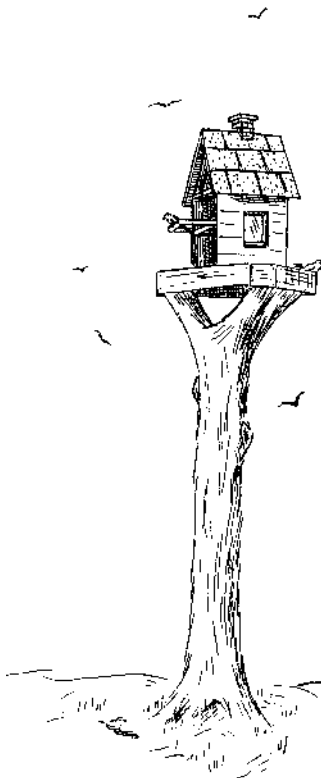


# BIRD HOUSES

*b y*

EDWARD R. FORD



THE CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

LINCOLN PARK - CHICAGO

Of about 135 species of birds which raise their young in the Chicago Region, 22 at least, have been known to keep house in manmade devices placed for their convenience. An elaborate bird house, an empty tin, a dried gourd, an earthen pot, or a plain unpainted box roughly put together, may seem to the prospective feathered housekeeper "just the thing."

Purple Martins are among the favorites of suburban dwellers. Often very large nesting colonies may be attracted. We know of one 500-compartment birdhouse which, figuratively, carries the sign "no vacancies."

Tree Swallows, like the Martins in grace of flight and feeding habits, and in their notes of lively contentment, seem to prefer a single box rather than one of several compartments.

Bluebirds will use accommodations of the sort provided for the Tree Swallows and other species.

Woodpeckers - the Red-headed, the Hairy, the Downy and the Yellow-shafted (the Flicker) - are served best by a wooden cylinder, capped at both ends and with a hole bored in the side for an entrance. It can be fashioned from a branch trimmed from a tree and then fixed vertically in the same or another tree.

The Crested Flycatcher, Starling, and English Sparrow will use "hole-in-a-tree" nests or simple boxes. So, too, will the Tufted Titmouse, Chickadee and White-breasted Nuthatch; but these will prefer an entrance of small diameter, such as is provided for the Downy Woodpecker. However, the Nuthatch would much rather have her cylinder nest in a horizontal position with the opening at the top of one of the capped ends.

The Wrens (of which the Bewick's and Carolina are too scarce in our region to warrant special arrangements for them) may preempt some of the holes provided for the Downy Woodpecker and the Chickadee but will prefer a nest opening even smaller.

The beautiful Prothonotary Warbler is a dweller of woodland swamp but, in suitable places along the Fox, the Kankakee, and the Des Plaines Rivers, they have been known to breed in artificial nests.

The Wood Duck, too, is rare hereabouts. Yet it is not impossible that in a few localities it may be brought to use nest boxes as it does where more numerous.

The Sparrow Hawk, Screech Owl, Barn Owl and Saw-whet Owl may be thought unsuitable tenants. However, the little hawk does not feed on birds and the little Saw-whet is so rare in the breeding season that it would be a distinction to have him as a guest even if he had the evil reputation of some of his family. The Barn Owl is especially useful as a check on rodents. The Screech Owl eats birds as well as mice; yet even for him, in a remote corner of a large estate, a simple home might be provided.

This leaflet is intended to interest those in whose hands it may be placed in providing nesting places for birds. Its limits will not permit the showing of plans for the construction of bird houses. For these, write for a free copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1456, addressing your request to the Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. If you prefer to make your own plans the figures below will serve as a guide for size.

DIMENSIONS OF NESTING BOXES FOR VARIOUS SPECIES OF BIRDS

<i>SPECIES</i>	<i>Floor of Cavity</i>	<i>Depth of Cavity</i>	<i>Entrance above floor</i>	<i>Diam. of Entrance</i>	<i>Height above ground</i>
Bluebird	5 x 5	8	6	1½	5 to 10 ft.
Chickadee	4 x 4	8 to 10	6 to 8	1¼	6 to 15 ft.
Tufted Titmouse	4 x 4	8 to 10	6 to 8	1¼	6 to 15 ft.
White-breasted Nuthatch	4 x 4	8 to 10	6 to 8	1¼	12 to 20 ft.
House Wren	4 x 4	6 to 8	1 to 6	1	6 to 10 ft.
Prothonotary Warbler	4 x 4	4 to 6	4	1½	4 to 10 ft.
Tree Swallow	5 x 5	6	1 to 5	1½	10 to 15 ft.
Purple Martin	6 x 6	6	1	2½	15 to 20 ft.
Starling	6 x 6	16 to 18	14 to 16	2	10 to 25 ft.
Crested Flycatcher	6 x 6	8 to 10	6 to 8	2	8 to 20 ft.
Flicker	7 x 7	16 to 18	14 to 16	2½	6 to 20 ft.
Red-headed Woodpecker	6 x 6	12 to 15	9 to 12	2	12 to 20 ft.
Hairy Woodpecker	6 x 6	12 to 15	9 to 12	1½	12 to 20 ft.
Downy Woodpecker	4 x 4	8 to 10	6 to 8	1½	6 to 20 ft.
Screech Owl	8 x 8	12 to 15	9 to 12	3	10 to 30 ft.
Saw-whet Owl	6 x 6	10 to 12	8 to 10	2½	12 to 20 ft.
Barn Owl	10 x 18	15 to 18	4	6	12 to 18 ft.
Wood Duck	10 x 18	10 to 15	3	6	4 to 20 ft.

*All above specifications are in inches except last column.*

### *Location of Houses*

Bluebirds, House Wrens, Tree Swallows, Purple Martins and Crested Flycatchers are likely to use a house set on a pole. The Tree Swallows and Martins love to feed over water but in any event their nests should be placed some 20 feet or more from buildings and trees. Chickadees, Titmice, Nuthatches, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Prothonotary Warblers, and Saw-whet Owls are woodland birds. Starlings, Flickers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, Screech Owls, Sparrow Hawks and Barn Owls, which often make their nests in the woods, are quite as likely to use convenient cavities in orchards and open country and about buildings. The Wood Duck is, of course, an aquatic species.